

Tree Expert Assesses Wetlands Damage

Conservation Commission members last week heard a certified arborist unveil a preliminary remediation plan to address recent wetlands violations and tree removal at the proposed 17 lot Freeman Farms subdivision site off Elm Street.

Norman Hayes, who was hired as a consultant by the ConCom but whose services will be paid for by developer Brad Cushing as part of an agreement with the commis-

sion, outlined a process for repairing the wetland damage.

The developer has accepted responsibility after a surveyor hired by his firm, Elm Street Realty Trust, erroneously staked the easement instead of the limit of work lines. As a result, tree cutting seriously infringed on the wetland area which abuts Island Creek and Mill Ponds.

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Hayes said that his findings show that a total of 82 trees were removed from the site. Some still have viable root systems in place and are sprouting. He listed them specifically by species and size. He also photographed the area showing remaining stumps and vegetation and assessed the species of the trees and the mix by classification.

He came up with a plan based on estimated crown diameter within seven years and recommended a total of 77 shrubs and trees to be replaced on the site.

Among the tree plantings he recommended to achieve a balanced replication of the area are: tupelos, pignut hickory, red maple, white pines, red oaks, red maples, white oaks, and black oaks. There will also be a sprout maintenance plan in place for the next three years to ensure growth.

The trees will be 10 to 12 feet when planted. As an example of the expected growth, he noted that a 12 foot tupelo should reach a height of 20 feet within seven years.

The recommended shrub layer includes: witch hazel, black alder, winterberry, high bush blueberries, arrowwood and other spreading shrubs which will be planted at heights of three to four feet.

Hayes said it is necessary to monitor the plantings designed to replicate the wetlands. He said he also made sure the plantings would replicate the ecosystem to support the wildlife used to inhabiting the area.

The total cost of the remediation plan has not been finalized yet, Hayes said.

Conservation Commission members are scheduled to walk the site with Hayes on Saturday, Nov. 6 at 9 am to go over the proposed remediation plan in detail before making a final determination on final action relating to the Freeman Farms wetlands violations.

Cushing and surveyor Mark Casey have agreed to cover the costs of the plant materials and work associated with the remediation plan.